

INDIAN CARPETS and Floor Coverings




Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay

COVER PAGE

A Bhotia carpet from Chumba District of Himachal Pradesh. The nomadic Bhotias make these carpets for their personal use. They are noted for their glowing colours.

Price: Rs. 12/-
\$ 3.60
£ 1.20



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by

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INDIAN CARPETS & FLOOR COVERINGS

Introduction

There seems to be no documentary evidence to prove the antiquity of the Indian carpet. Excavations by Aurel Stein in Eastern Turkestan revealed evidence of Indian merchandise, important among them being some unique wooden documents. One of them is an oblong tablet, dated in the ninth year of King Jitroghavarsham, relating to commercial transactions by a certain Buddhaghosha attached to a Buddhist Monk Anandasena. In this tablet some household articles are enumerated, among them, wool weaving appliances and "Namdis." This is accepted as the earliest reference to what we know now as Namdas, made of a sort of felt from pressed wool.

The Pazaryk rug discovered in a tomb glaciated for 2000 years in the Altai Mountains also points to the very early beginnings of the carpet industry. This carpet which is of excellent design and execution has a border of running friezes of riders and stags and a small central field filled with rosettes in rows. This is woven with 230 knots to the square inch and was in all probability used as a saddle cover.

The Indian pile carpet's recorded history seems to begin in the 16th Century around 1580 A. D., when the Moghul Emperor Akbar brought some Persian carpet weavers from Persia to India and set up the royal workshop in his own palace. Akbar commissioned these weavers to produce carpets equal to those of Persia. Thus the Indian pile carpet began to take shape. The carpet weavers were given all facilities and treated with respect and honour. Many of the best specimens of the carpets produced in this royal workshop now adorn the walls of several museums in the West. One of the earliest and most noted amongst them was given as a gift by one Robert Bell to the Girdlers Company, London, in 1634 when he was master of that company, and there it now lies.

These carpets speak eloquently for the superb workmanship of the Indian weavers. Like all countries where people, rich and poor alike, habitually sat on the floor, floor coverings of all types were bound to be evolved with imagination and aesthetic sense.

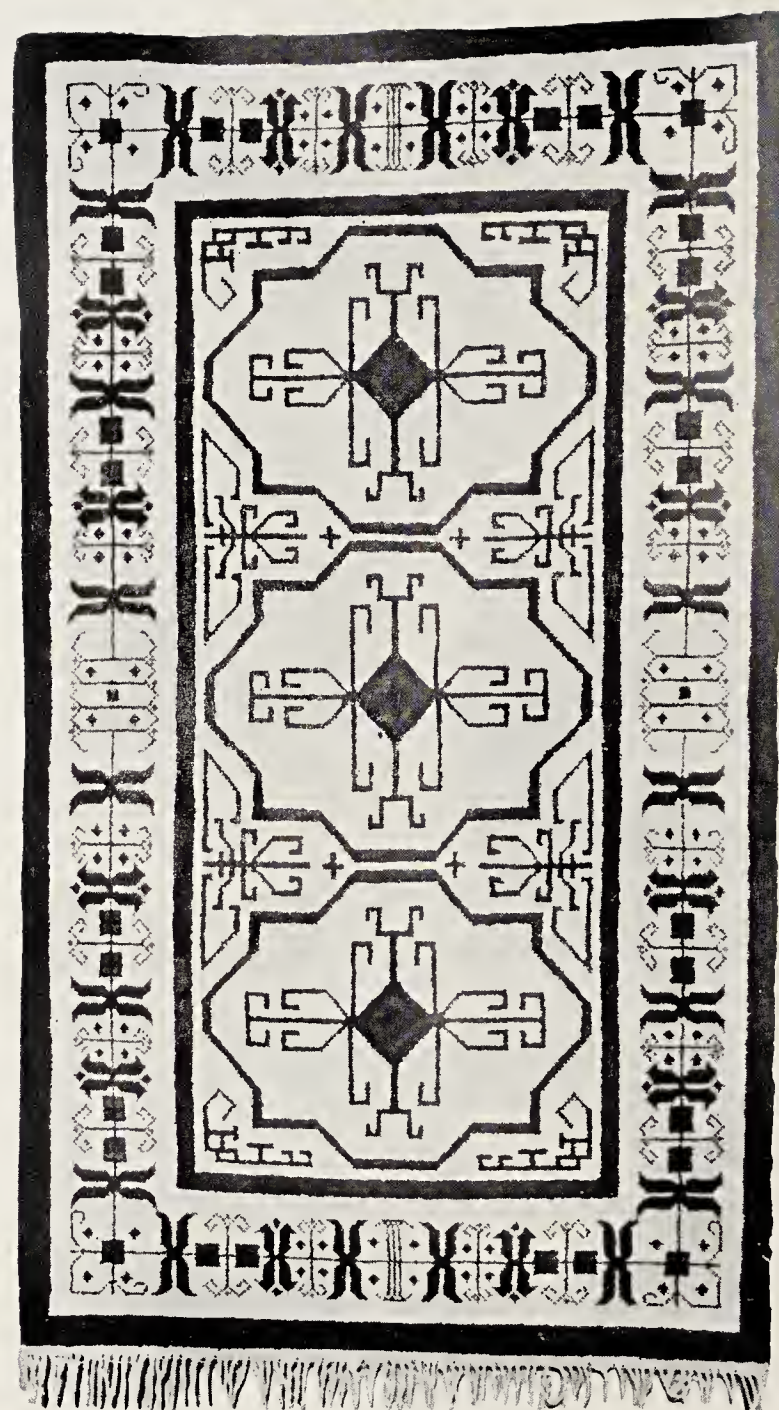
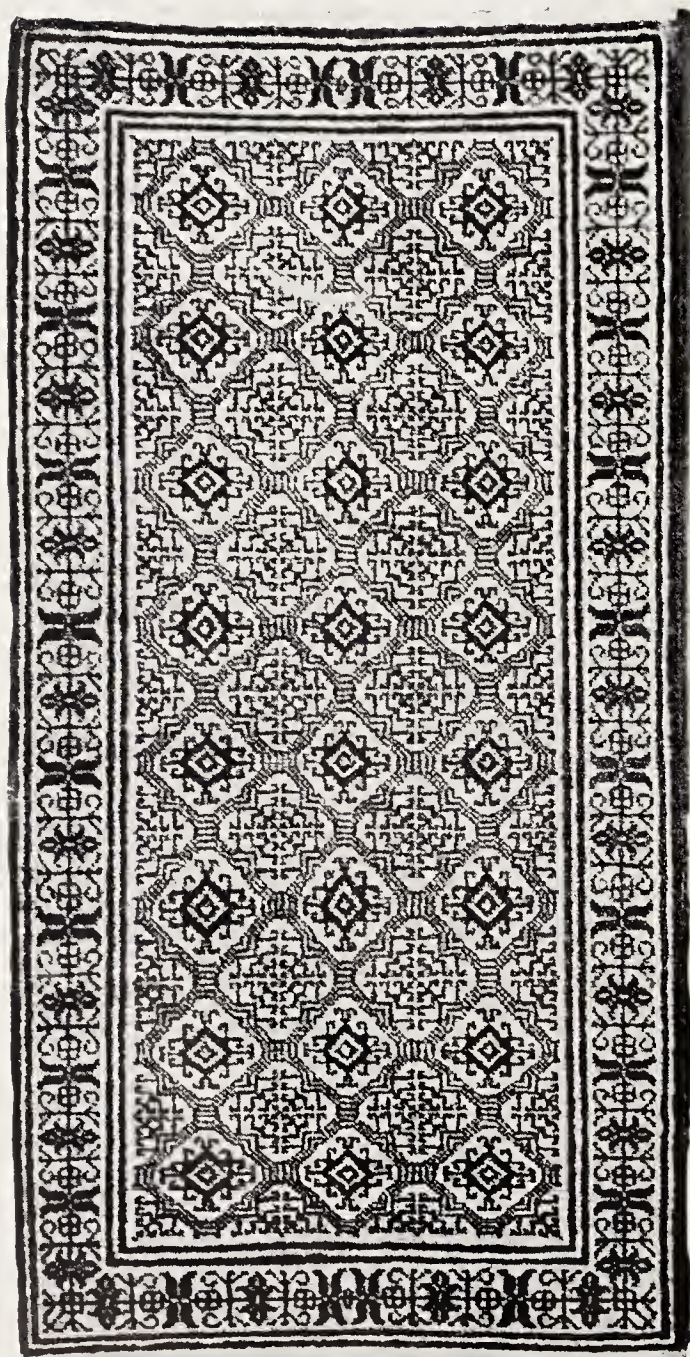
While Akbar introduced the art of pile carpet weaving in silk and finest wool with floral, animal and bird designs, the great tradition was continued by his successors Jehangir and especially the beauty-loving Shah Jehan during whose reign these carpets gained renown even outside India.

The best pile carpets seem to have been woven during the reign of these three emperors. Carpet factories were set up in Agra, Delhi, Lahore, etc. The early designs of these carpets were naturally patterned on the Persian, since the inspira-



A reproduction of a Seventeenth Century pictorial carpet manufactured in Kashmir by the East-India Carpet Company.

Traditional carpet from Shahjehanpur



Carpet woven in Shahjehanpur with traditional motifs magnified.

tion was from Persia and the original weavers from that land. Thus the traditional designs have been largely confined to Kirman, Kashan, Isfahan, Herat, etc., while some in Kashmir took on Central Asian characteristics, like Bokhara. The weave was also naturally in the Persian or Sonneh knot. By and by the houses of the nobility also ran looms with expert weavers preparing special designs to suit the individual fancy and varied tastes of these patrons.

Commenting on this Sir George Birdwood, a deep student of Indian arts and crafts of his time, wrote: "The Princes, great nobles and wealthy gentry, who are the chief patrons of these grand fabrics, collect in their houses and palaces all who gain a reputation for special skill. They receive a fixed salary and daily rations and are so little hurried in their work that they have plenty of time to execute the orders. Their salaries are continued even when, through age or accident, they are past work; and on their death pass on to their sons, should they become skilled in their fathers' art. Upon the completion of any extraordinary work, it is submitted to the patron and some honour is conferred on the artist and his salary increased. It is under such conditions that the best art work of the East has always been produced."

In these carpets the floral designs were presented in rows of flowering plants each delineated separately and entirely down to the roots as if planted in a garden; or set in the interestices of a trellis as though climbing; or single flowering plants enclosed within frames or compartments. In all, the stem was shown as a natural living organism.

In the animal patterns also the figures were full of life and energy. The presentation of figures pressed them on toward the pictorial, while with the floral motifs through a distribution of colours that helped to model the subject, obtained a plastic effect rare in carpets.

The colouring in these carpets was somewhat lighter than in the Persian. Pink was a distinctive colour in use, especially for contrast and outline. The technique

was extremely fine and the knots varied from seven hundred to one thousand five hundred to the square inch.

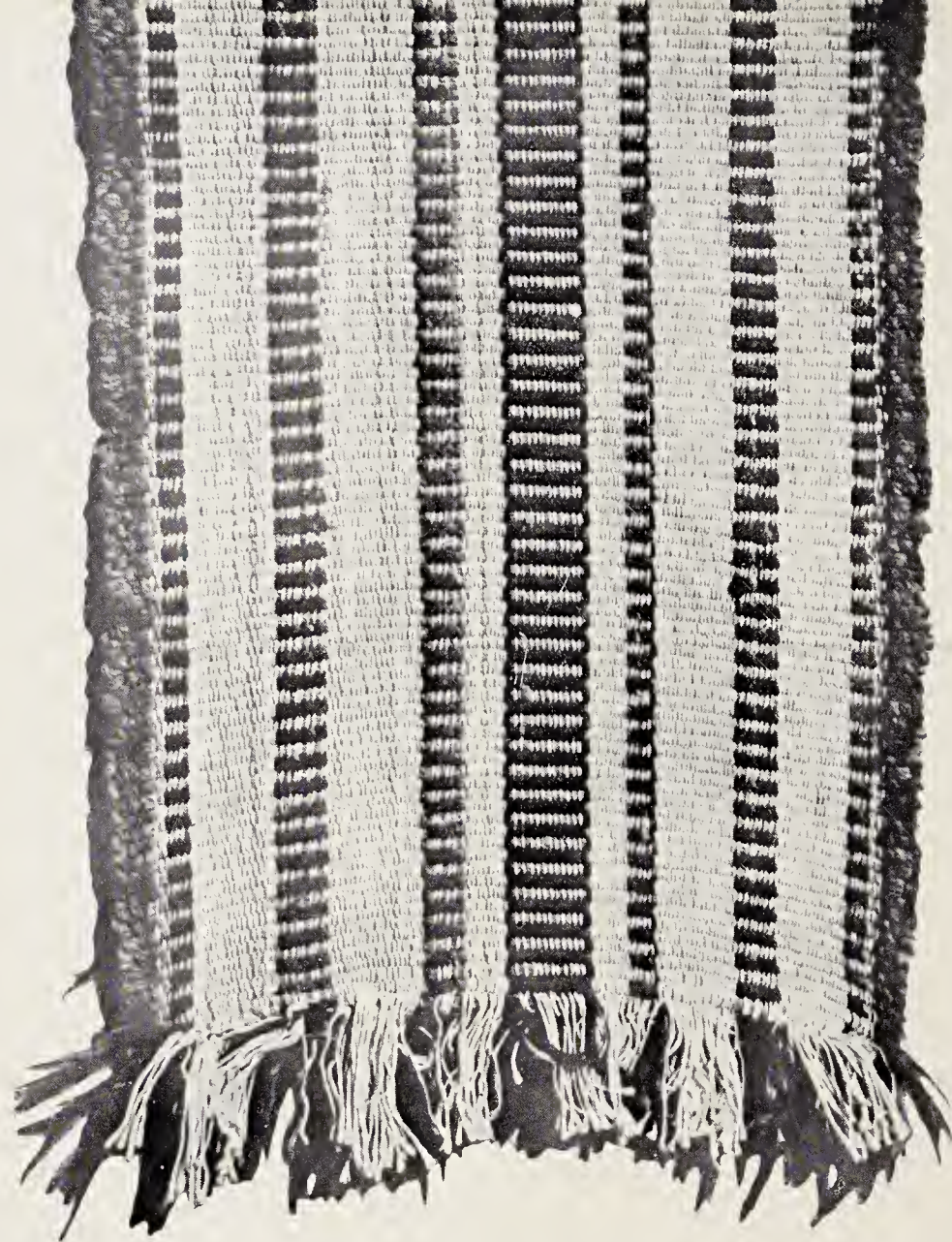
In the *Ain-i-Akbari*, in a reference to carpets, it is stated that there were wonderful varieties and charming textures and that "the carpets of Iran and Turan are no more thought of." There is ample testimony to the excellence of these products of the Moghul period. Some of these carpets are in the Jaipur museum but some of the best in the rare collections in London, especially in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and some museums in Europe and America. These carpets were admitted as having almost an unconscious subtlety about them. It was considered difficult to analyse the secret of the harmonious bloom of Indian textures, even with the aid of Cheorcul's prismatic scale, for it is only through generations of patient practice that men attain to the mystery of such subtleties. One of the earliest and finest examples of Moghul carpets dated the 16th Century is in the South Kensington Museum. Woven in somewhat of a Turkish style, it is in a free and graceful pattern with rich but soft colours. Boldly drawn, the spaces contained in the inner side of the curve are blue and those on the outer red. On each blue segment is a delicate and graceful floral design in which is placed skilfully the typical Chinese dragon of darkness, breathing ferociousness at the terrified bird of light. In the red segments, similar unequal contests are in progress between leopard and deer, or leopard and cow. In the vivid pulsating red, which creates its own deep atmosphere, is a tree-and-flower-filled garden through which roam game animals. In a centre cartouche are fish and water weeds, with pear-shaped vases on either side supported by dragons. In eight smaller cartouches disposed symmetrically upon the field, a flying duck appears on a blue background, on which floats a Chinese cloud. The wild duck sails among the fleecy clouds in a struggle with the dragon, typifying the battle between light and darkness—Day and Night.

The Ardebil and Herati are two other designs to be found in these early carpets. In the latter there was something regal in the great curves and bold strokes of the



A carpet woven in Srinagar using the traditional Kashmir shawl design. This carpet was created by the School of Design, Srinagar which has been endeavouring to develop a new style of carpets with a distinct Kashmiri flavour.

Hand-embroidered hook rug from Kashmir. The design is a departure from the traditional and has been adapted from folk embroidery motifs collected by the School of Design, Srinagar.



Thobi, a floor covering woven with goat's hair, from Pangl, Chamba District of Himachal Pradesh.

designer who seemed to command ample breadth. There was also a delicate proportion of the field to border, an extreme closeness of the stitches without creating an oppressive crowdedness, as well as the skilful chorus of the colours in outline. According to F. H. Andrews these earliest examples are remarkable for the boldness of the curving stems and soft, cool harmony of the colour, in which is found a good deal of a fine green and deep blue. The border consists of a broad band, separated from the centre and edged on the outer side by one or two very narrow bands. On the broad band, bold and highly conventional flowers alternate with long serrated leaves carried on delicate and graceful undulating stems.

The carpet industry, once it was settled in the country, seems to have grown rapidly and spread from Kashmir to Tanjore and become quite intertwined with the other weaving habits of the people. Beginning as a copy of the Persian, the pile carpet industry gradually became Indianised, taking on a character of its own.

Sir George Birdwood says: "In all these carpets the first thing to observe is the complete subordination of the decoration to the surface. A carpet presents, of course, a flat surface, and the decoration in these Indian carpets, it will be seen, is never allowed to disturb the impression of their flatness. This effect is obtained by representing the ornamentation on them in a strictly conventional manner, and without shadow. The next thing to observe is the skill with which the ornamentation is distributed, nearly always in a symmetrical manner, and with such perfect balance that even where it is most crowded there is no effect of overcrowding. Then, it is interesting to notice the wonderful variation of the same ornamental forms in all these carpets. No two of them present in the details of their decoration actual repeats of each other, yet in most of them it consists of the knop and flower pattern, that is, of the lotus bud and lotus flower, which has been the universal form among the Asiatic Aryans from the beginning of their art history."

This seems to be indeed a basic principle in all Indian handicrafts. The

shape in designing is always the most important, everything else is secondary. The defect in the lines is never sought to be covered up by ornate decoration. The shape itself has to be perfect.

The Indian love of nature, of animals, birds flying or on trees, etc., so evident in Indian paintings, naturally found their way into carpets. There are all-over designs of scrolling stems, leaves and finely-drawn giant flower heads within a panel head. A lot of care is lavished on the lionmask border. All oriental designs are supposed to have some hidden meaning, such as: Circle=Eternity; Zigzag=water and lightning; Swastika=guiding light in darkness; Meandering line=continuity of life; Tree=bounty. Normally a carpet had to convey the two symbols of eternity and transitional change.

Pile Carpets

The pile carpets in India are mainly manufactured in two varieties of yarns, handspun which accounts for 40 percent of the production and mill-yarn used in 60 percent. As both the durability and beauty of the carpet depends on the quality of the wool used, the raw material is equally important with the type of weft and the quality of the knots. While India has a fairly large production of wool suitable for carpets, the better quality wool which used to be mixed with Indian, always came from Tibet which is now closed to us. This finer wool was largely used in the better variety of products and it also lent lustre to the carpet. For the time being at least the finer wool has to be imported. The production of carpets, barring a few factory ones, is done as a cottage industry.

Carpets and rugs made in India may be divided into five kinds. The cheapest having the warp and woof of cotton, with blue, red and white stripes are known as Suttringes. Made all over the country, they are generally considered hard, as cotton driven home with the wooden comb forms a hard, unyielding body but still has the advantage of making the pattern stand out sharp and decided. Another kind is made

with the warp of cotton and the woof of wool. The loom employed in weaving these two kinds is horizontal, without either treadles or reeds. Yet another kind is made of cotton warp and woof with a short pile of cotton worked into it. This necessitates a different kind of loom; the warp is placed vertically and the various colours employed to form the pattern handed down from bobbins between the warp and the workman; the woof is passed by the hand and then driven home by the comb. The fourth group which is in general use, is with the pile of wool, the warp and woof being either flax, wool or cotton. The fifth is of silk pile, with flax or wool for warp and woof. This has a richness of its own with rare equal.

Methods of Weaving

The loom is upright with moveable horizontal timbers. The weaving is sometimes described as the enrichment of a web. The warps run vertically and the wefts horizontally. Short bits of woollen yarn are knotted about two adjacent warp cords in such a manner that their two ends hang out upon the upper surface of the web. The work starts at the bottom and moves upwards and as the knotting is completed that portion is rolled up around the weavers' lower cross-beam. After each row of knots, cotton yarn which forms the weft is passed through and acts as a binder. The yarn used in each knot has to have sufficient length to be able to hold the warp together and therefore it becomes necessary to clip the pile if the fine details of the pattern are to come into clear focus. That is why the finer the design, the closer the shearing. The ends are finished with a kind of tapestry weave, khilim-weave as it is called, to prevent the knots from slipping loose, while the outer warps at the sides are reinforced with overcasting. Finally the end fringes made up from the free ends of the warp cords are plaited after the carpet has been detached from the crossbeams.

Pile Knots

To tie a knot a weaver passes an end of dyed yarn between two adjacent warp strings, around one and over and under the other, snaps the two loops into the line of

weaving, and severs the projecting yarn with the stroke of a knife. Or else he passes the yarn end between two warps, around one and merely under the other. This operation can be repeated by one expert weaver as many as twelve thousand times a day. The average is counted at fifteen knots a minute which make a speed of about nine hundred an hour.

The knots are tied in rows, one to each pair of strings, and bound in horizontal ranks by a cross yarn called weft, which is run through the warp strings above each row of knots. It is made tight by beating down the rows after each knot is tied. Sometimes four to six rows of knots are done for inserting a weft; in others as many as six wefts are used for each row of knots. The first ensures finesse, the latter strength.

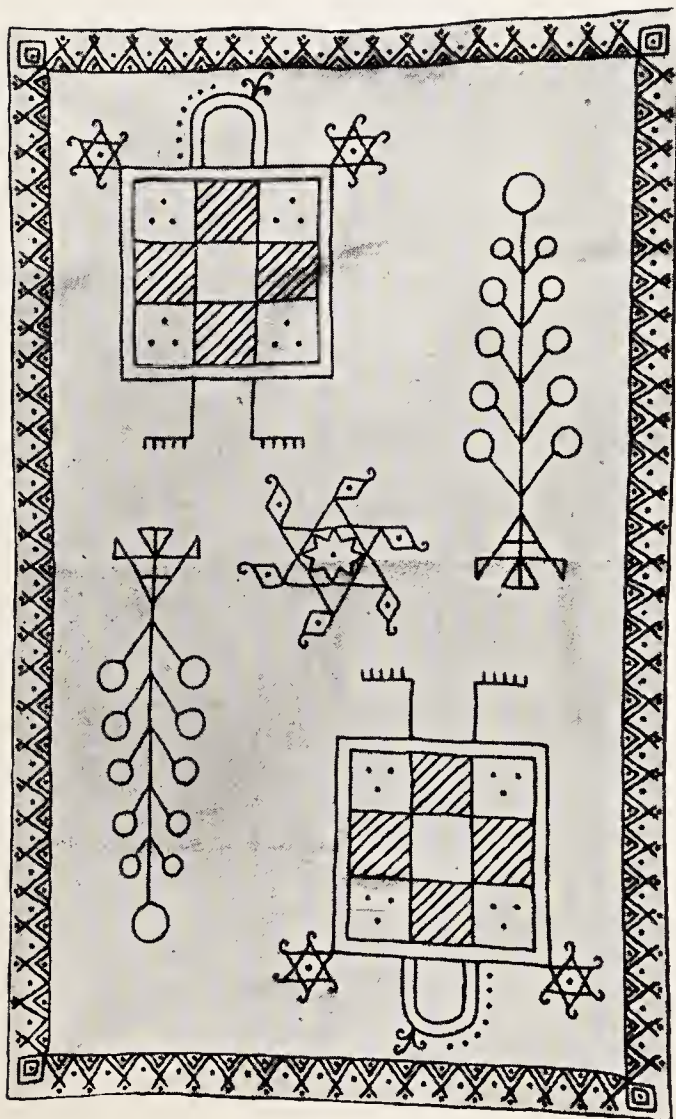
The two knots, used in carpet weaving are Persian or Sehna and Turkish or Ghiordes. These names are, however, misleading. For instance, of the fiftyseven varieties of Persian carpets about fifty are tied in the Turkish knot. Though distinguishing them may seem simple in theory, actually in practice, especially in fine weave, a magnifying glass is required. The average knots per inch vary from sixty-four to four hundred. Each knot is independent, firm on its own private foundation. The knots, however masterly, are only the means to an end—the working out of a fine design. The surface yarn inclines toward the bottom of the weaving as the yarn of both knots rises to the surface below the collars. This flow of surface material occasions the innumerable variations in shades with the change of every angle in spreading a carpet. For in one the light may be absorbed, in another reflected.

Pile Rug Looms

The oriental rug loom is a huge embroidery frame, strung taut as the weavers manipulate the strings. The loom consists of two upright timbers set four to twenty or more feet apart, according to the width of the rug to be woven, joined top and bottom by rigid or rollable cross-timbers. The frame is set upright in the ground



Hook embroidered namda from Srinagar with typical Kashmiri shawl design.



From Rajasthan comes this Tonk, a namda rug embroidered with ritual floor decoration motifs.



An applique worked namda from Kashmir designed by the School of Design, Srinagar.

against a wall, or infrequently laid flat on the earth. In a big carpet the weavers work from a seat holding as many as twenty or even thirty people. When the cross timbers are rollers, the line of work is lowered to the level of the hands of the weavers who work sitting on a bench, and the completed weaving is wound upon the lower timber.

Design into Weave

There are said to be about five methods employed for translating a design into the weave. The Persian method is to make a large drawing of a small section of an accepted pattern, rule it into squares each representing a square foot of the finished weaving, subdivide each square into one hundred and fortyfour squares, each to represent a square inch and these again into sixty or four hundred squares, each coloured to represent a particular knot, all of which the weavers follow most painstakingly. The Persians also prepare small sample weavings three feet by five, called "Vagirets", which the weavers can copy. The knotting is copied as revealed on the under side. Some are also woven without paper patterns, but not the fine ones.

The Indian method is to use the Talim by the design writers and readers. The scribe determines and writes down the colour of each knot in every line which the reader then communicates to the weavers—a stupendous task considering that this might run into millions of knots. The directions are recited in a sing-song style, which is equally complicated, for, on a large composition there may be over twenty weavers at work.

The Chinese method is either to create a full size paper model of the intended carpet for the weavers to copy or to trace the design with coloured crayons on the set up warp, the latter method being more practicable for carpets of large pattern and open areas.

Besides the pile rug other types of floor coverings are woven. Kilim is known also as Karamanies after the leading centre of their production and distribution.

Kilim is tapestry and literally means a woven fabric, reversible and without a pile. It is still in popular demand, for it is both decorative as well as light in weight, and comes in handy for bundling personal effects. In weaving, strands of dyed yarn are inserted crosswise through the warp with change of colour to get a design. This is a flat surface rug, with both sides alike. Usually firm and compact, sometimes it is shot through with slits where the colours break, woven separately in narrow parallel bands. The finest of these are woven to a density of one hundred cross-yarns to the perpendicular inch which works out to seven thousand two hundred of them to the standard six foot length.

Soumak Carpets

The Soumak carpet derives its name from the Caucasian town of Shemakha. The weft thread is brought forward in front of four warp threads and then back behind two. Since the direction of the thread changes in alternate rows, a characteristic herring bone effect is produced. After every or every other line of stitches, a weft thread, subsequently hidden, is inserted to give strength to the fabric.

Oriental carpets like so many oriental crafts have remained anonymous. Neither the authors of these many magnificent designs nor the excellent weavers are known. In handmade carpets the fringe is always formed by the warp ends. But in machine made carpets the fringe is made separately and the reverse is smooth and even.

The Hook Rug

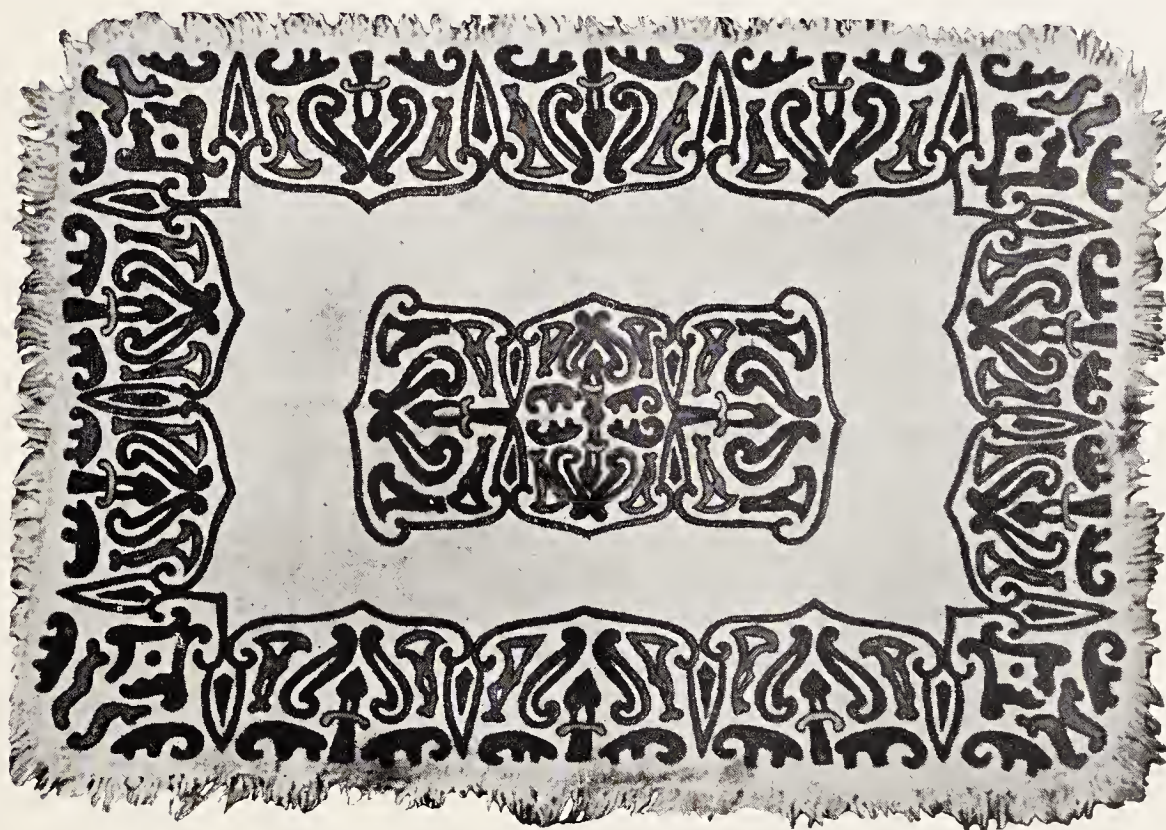
Hooking a rug is of very recent origin in India. It was introduced by the British during their regime in the country.

In the West, both in Europe and America where it has enjoyed great popularity from very early times, it prevailed in the home more as a hobby than as a voca-



Animal motifs are used effectively in this namda from Srinagar, created by the School of Design.

Another namda by the School of Design with a bold and effective Central motif and border, from Kashmir.





A fireside rug in contemporary design
by Ashima Choudary of New Delhi.

tion. There is a theory that this was an invention of sailors to keep themselves usefully and creatively occupied during their long voyages. It certainly had been a pretty consistent occupation for many, especially the women through the long winter months.

In recent times hooking rugs has been revived on a fairly wide and commercial scale.

The base in this rug is the burlap on which the design is marked, allowing a border of one and a half inches all round to be hemmed. The burlap is then tacked on to the frame. The frame can be of any size and improvised with even just four sticks of wood out of almost anything. The burlap surface on which the hooking is to be done must be kept clear of the frame.

It is said that in the old days the hook was also improvised out of a rail or file. Any old worn-out flannel can be cut up into strips and held under the burlap while the hook is thrust through the surface. Then a couple of meshes of the burlap are passed over and the hook is thrust again but this time it is the loop that is pulled up. The same action is repeated and loop after loop is picked up. Usually this is worked from right to left. The flannel strip may be of any length. When one strip is finished, the start on the new one is made by pushing the hook down the last hole where the previous one had ended so that the new one is firmly and neatly packed into it.

The use of different materials for the strips provides a variety in the texture that gives a distinct interest to each weave and at the same time provides a wider range in the type of carpets. The unevenness and irregularity lends a special character. From closely woven fabrics to old hand knitted sweaters come in handy for strips. Rayon is also used but only the spun variety which has more the appearance of wool, and only for introducing flowers, vines and tendrils. There is an attempt not to make the loops in continuous rows right in front of each other so that a loop faces an empty space in the next row.

Geometric designs are attractive and popular in hook rugs. Actually this offers an infinite variety with various combinations and permutations. There is a wide range to choose form—squares, rectangles, hexagons, ovals, circles, diamonds, ellipse. Another attractive design is the mosaic, in which again infinite varieties are worked out. Flowers, trees, shrubs are common decorative motifs, either worked by themselves or along with other patterns. Then there are the scrolls. They, too, afford large variations and can be worked in with many other things. A certain traditional criterion is offered for judging the perfection of a rug's appearance. It is this : it should enable the eye to travel unconsciously from one motif to another providing a sense of harmony. One criterion laid down for the use of the scroll is that it should have enough of the material from the central motif to balance or harmonise the two.

In fact this principle seems to apply to the designing and evolving of borders in general. The border has to bear a relationship to the body in some way so that the two are not divorced from each other. There are excellent examples of floral centre patterns balancing with geometric borders.

The hook rug is very new to India. It was introduced originally in Srinagar in Kashmir and in recent years has spread to Dharamsala in the Panjab. It is a style that has immense possibilities. Both the raw material and the tool are extremely simple, inexpensive and easy to obtain. It does not call for prolonged training. There is considerable scope for a lot of individual initiative and inventiveness. It is durable even though cheap in investment. In short it is an ideal home industry.

Organisation of the Carpet Industry

During the 18th Century the Indian pile carpet reached Europe. Its appearance at the London Exhibition of 1851 put it for the first time on the global map and gave it a prominent place in the Western world. Not only did it attract attention

there, but traders traced it back to its place of origin. Soon a few English carpet manufacturing firms opened their factories at Srinagar, Amritsar, Mirzapur, and so on. This in a way marks the beginning of carpet production on modern lines in India.

But disaster overtook the designs in course of time. The original Kashmir and Persian designs were bound to decline with age. The failing virility and strength within the industry, laid it open to alien encroachments as carpet importers from the Western countries started sending their own designs to be woven here. Soon interior decorators also joined them. In colouring, too, deterioration set in. Harsh and garish combinations were introduced and colours became rigid and flat and uniform instead of slightly broken, varying and blending in shades. Changes were made without care and thought, upsetting balances and harmonies evolved over the centuries. Often these carpets were not even poor copies, rather they were a shoddy debasement of what once was beautiful and elegant.

The fancy of some of the Westerners for antiques also led to the production of fakes with artificially faded carpets being offered for sale in place of the vibrant and limpid colours of the old master-weavers. The lowest level of this commercialism in Indian carpets was reached when immense rolls of the plain unfigured carpet material were turned out for sale by the yard as if it were a linen fabric.

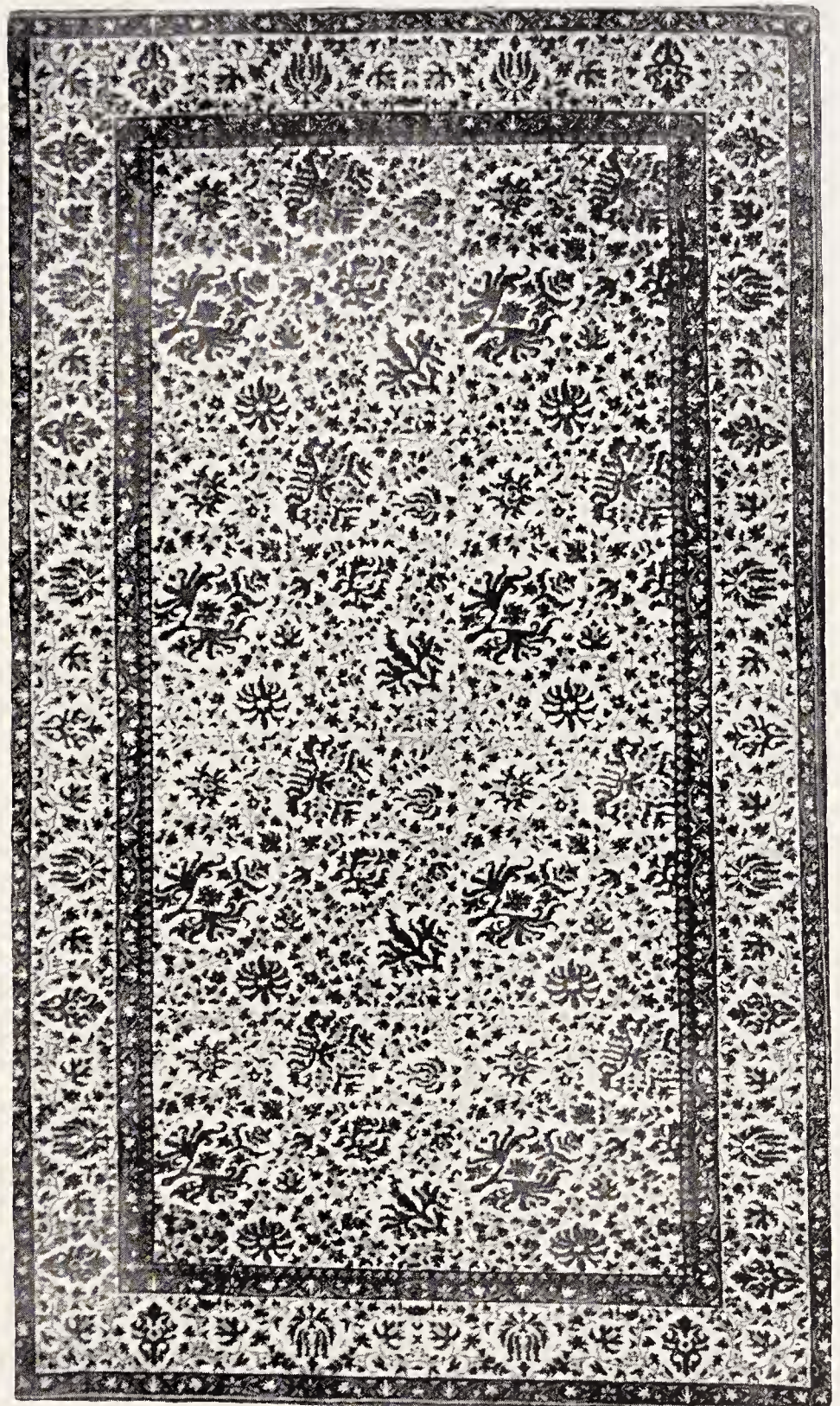
Designing is an important and integral part of a carpet even as much as the colouring, for it is this that infuses life and both excites and soothes the carpet users. We have noted that as carpet production got more and more tied up with export the designs began to get unsettled under diverse foreign demands. Today as export still dominates carpet production, the same situation continues. The range is from the delicate Persian to the sturdy Central Asian, from the reticent English Queen Annish to the quiet French Aubussan. Here are some of the nomenclatures used for our carpets, which do not ring true and are rather confusing though colourful. The

Taj Mahal carpet is a plum rug in ivory or any tint. Savonnerie, originally a French handmade pile rug, now made in India. Nordick has simple straight lines, few colours. In gold and white, green and white are the Kandahar carpets. Kandharis are also made with the Savonnerie designs usually in pastel shades of ivory and cream, with light colours like soft green or blue for the field. They are also made with an open field with floral sprays, in two corners. It is compactly woven in fine quality wool or heavily woven. China is the name for carpets in Chinese designs. Sirdar is another rug made for export in plain soft colours in hand-embossed or hand-carved borders. It is in rose beige, honey beige, ivory and soft green.

We have still not worked creatively and consistently on evolving typical designs that stand out as Indian in an international medley. It is not for want of designs or creative ability but lack of serious attention. The All India Handicrafts Board made a start in this direction but not purposefully or creatively enough to show the required results. Carpet designing calls for a special eye and talent. For it has to be armed with qualities that can overcome the disadvantage of having to go flat down on the floor. The design must be such as can "stand up" even while the carpet lies inert on the ground. This is where the traditional Oriental designs have succeeded in triumphing over the modern ones and are able to bring alive the room with their presence. Much more will have to be done to build up a definite image of an Indian carpet. Only in some of the smaller production centres do we find some worthwhile traditional Oriental designs. They too are in decline.

From the early days of the British rule a tendency had been growing to introduce carpet weaving in prisons to provide the long-term prisoners a dependable vocation for earning their livelihood. Later this became an established feature and more and more prisons came to introduce carpet weaving. Well-known carpet lovers led the opposition to this. They were convinced that this would injure the carpet industry since the prison carpets would provide an unfair competition. Moreover this institution also by-passed the highly skilled traditional weavers hailing from

In tones of blue and ivory white this carpet has been created by the Design School in Srinagar which is attempting to introduce indigenous Kashmiri designs for carpets.



Navalgud durrie in vivid earthy colours with juxtaposition of simple geometrical designs. The "chopat" design which is an Indian game has been introduced at the Centre.



families which for generations had done nothing but carpet weaving. All in all, prison carpets also added to the other factors which contributed to the decline in the carpet industry.

Although carpets are woven all over the country, pile carpets are at present confined to about 20 centres spread over seven States. In this Uttar Pradesh leads with about 10 centres, manufacturing something like 90 percent of the entire production. The total number of workers connected with the carpet industry are estimated around a lakh, weavers being in the neighbourhood of 44,000 of which 33,000 are said to be in Uttar Pradesh and the rest of the 11,000 in other centres. The production figures for 1964-65 are in the region of 13, 32,263 square metres of the value of Rs. 4.7 crores.

The public shows little or no interest in the survival of the pile carpet. True, pile carpets may not figure in a big way in the nation's everyday life because of our tropical climate. Nevertheless, they are objects of rare beauty, unique products of great prestige value. Several otherwise unknown places have received recognition only because of the lovely carpets they produce.

What remains today of this splendid craft is merely a shadow. It rests on weak foundations, is undermined by disorganisation. Because of these disabilities, the position of the workers too is depressed and unstable. Although there is an association of the carpet manufacturers, it seems to be ruled more by competition than by a spirit of cooperation. These weaknesses are spotlighted by the fact that out of our total exports in the field of wool, the manufactured items account for Rs. 6.5 crores while the export of plain wool goes upto Rs. 9 crores. The monumental pile carpet which once ranked with gems and jewels in a family is today like a mansion in ruins, with its noble reputation in the dust. Even the fact that it is such a sure foreign exchange earner does not seem to have benefitted it in any appreciable manner. On the contrary this has led more and more to a cheap commercialisation to its detriment.

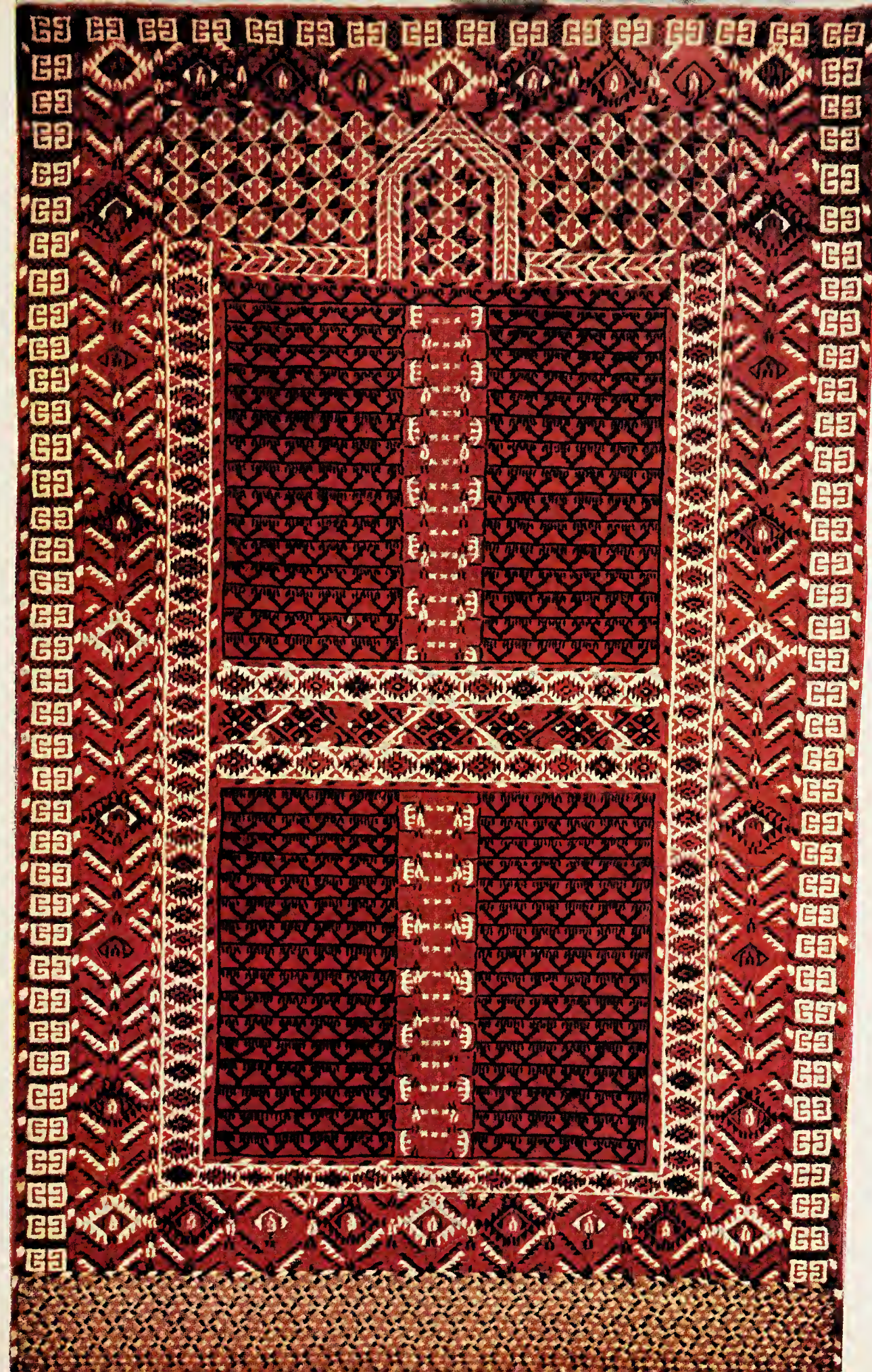
Bhadohi—Mirzapur

Uttar Pradesh has the greatest concentration of carpet weavers and largest number of centres of production with Mirzapur, Bhadohi, Khamaria and places around leading in carpet weaving. It has been for long the most important market for carpets with a great reputation. Situated amidst a past cotton growing area, it is not surprising that it should have developed as a big weaving centre. It is said that originally, Bhadohi was the leading place. But as more foreigners began to take interest, Mirzapur came up. The latter attracted foreigners partly for its better climate as well as for the opportunities of hunting it offered. It seems at one time to have offered high class carpets in fine vegetable dyes. At the Paris Exhibition of 1867, Mirzapur carpets won acclaim. Even when coarser wool was used designs which showed up well in the rough texture made them attractive and desirable. Evidently some Persian designs were used. Today, however, it makes the coarser variety of carpets. Sometimes, they do weave upto 100 knots per square inch and the manufacture in better grades is going up though very slowly. In spite of the size of the industry, it is not well organised and suffers from the usual ills of a weak unit.

There is nothing exciting by way of original designs. Those in use have the usual range from the Persian to the French, and seem rather stagnant compared with the size of the industry. The industry is almost wholly tied to export. Though a large section of it is on a cottage basis, hardly anything has been done to offer the artisans common facilities. Even the minimum wage act has set a low figure and the earnings are very depressed.

Agra

With the end of the Moghul dynasty, the carpet industry received a heavy setback and the weavers went through great privations. Around the middle of the 19th Century, a group of Germans in search of Indian carpets set up factories in different cities of India like Amritsar, Srinagar, and even ventured South. Less than a



A pardah sarouk carpet from Agra,
Uttar Pradesh.



A section of a carpet from Jaipur with geometrical designs.

century later when the British East India Carpet Company was established, it was able to buy out the German concerns which had been placed under a handicap during World War I. As the world market for carpets opened again from 1920, the now well-known Indian firm of Kailash Carpet Company came to be established.

With fewer industries in the country and only a moderate demand on wool, the carpet industry in Agra flourished, especially feeding the American market. But the depression in America followed soon after by World War II brought gloom to the industry. In this dark interlude, the producers had switched to inferior quality and cheaper goods to eke out a livelihood. The partition of India meant a loss of hundreds of good weavers who migrated from India. Shortage of raw material and good weavers placed Agra in a weaker position as compared with the Bhadohi-Mirzapur area.

The two main production agencies in Agra today are the Kailash Carpet Co. and the East India Carpet Co., the latter being British owned and a branch of the Amritsar one. The former works on a cottage basis, farming out its orders to individual weavers. The East India concern is a well-organised factory. There are about 120 looms between the two, with another 50 operated locally by individuals. The number of weavers is in the neighbourhood of about 250. The average earning of a weaver is between Rs. 2 and 7 a day, according to the ability of each weaver and quality of his work. As Agra produces better quality work and there is a shortage of good weavers, wages are not so depressed. There is an attempt being made to train fresh hands. The total current production is estimated at 20,000 square yards valued at about Rs. 200,000.

Agra produces three varieties, the Persian, Turkoman and Aubussan. In the Persian the Isfahan variety (long leaf, floral) and Kashan (small leaf and floral) are common. In the Turkoman, only the Mohru Bukhara. The French, Aubussan, accounts for more than half the carpets. These Aubussan carpets generally have

wine-red, green or cream colours for the ground, with large floral designs in the centre and matching but smaller repetitions of the central motif in the corners. The pile is given an embossed effect by clipping away wool around the patterns, making them appear to stand out. It is presumed that these Aubussan carpets being cheaper in price and easier to make will further increase their demand, encroaching more and more on the already small quantity of Persian and Turkoman types which, being more complicated and needing more time for weaving, naturally cost more. While the usual Aubussan has an average of 16 to 62 knots per square inch, the Oriental has 120 to 400 knots. All are woven with the Persian Sonneh knot. They have cotton warp and weft and are made from mill spun or worsted yarn. Fast chrome colours are used in the dyeing and are reliable. Fortyfive shades are used. The carpets are also given chemical baths to protect them from vermin and other pests.

In the Persian designs seven to eleven shades are generally used. Wine-red, deep blue and cream are usually popular for ground colours. For example a carpet with a red ground colour will have a dark blue border with two more blues, one medium and one light blue; two green shades, one dark and one light, two camel shades, one brown and one gold; one black and one dark brown. In the more sophisticated carpets four shades of each of the above colours are used.

Shahjehanpur

Shahjehanpur is another centre in Uttar Pradesh for pile carpets. It makes both woollen and cotton carpets. It is not as old as some other centres in India. It seems to go only a hundred years back when a convict released from jail set up carpet weaving to earn his livelihood since he had learnt the craft in his prison days. Success came his way and soon there was quite a prospering industry.

As in several parts of Uttar Pradesh, carpet weaving is essentially a home industry here, with a family operating one or two looms. There are about 500 families and roughly around 2500 people working on about 1000 looms through 57

establishments. The looms are kept fairly busy. The dealers place orders directly with the weavers, supply them raw material and lift the finished goods. There is no marketing problem facing the Shahjehanpur weavers. Their goods are easily lifted because they are cheap. Partly this is because cheap handspun wool and cotton yarn is used and the weave is also coarser. Commonly there are only 50 knots to a square inch but for special orders for better quality products, the knots go up to 70.

When quality control was introduced in carpets in 1962, it was expected to improve the product and encourage sales. Unfortunately only eight dealers have so far registered themselves under quality control.

Wages are on piece rate, which works out to Rs. 1.25 per day which is pitifully low. The annual production is in the neighbourhood of 5,00,000 square feet valued at Rs. 10,00,000. The weavers still continue to use mostly traditional Persian and some Turkoman designs as also traditional colours. The designs carry the traditional names according to the motifs used in them. The popular ones are: Chourangia, Kothriwala jal, Takdur and Janawaz. The weavers seem to know the designs so well that they hardly need to depend on graphs. The colours generally used are black and red. For floral motifs, however, other colours such as orange, green and yellow are in use.

The general economic backwardness of this region places this industry at an initial disadvantage in a competitive market. It is a totally depressed craft, as no attempt is made at any stage to improve or build it up.

Srinagar—Kashmir

Kashmir is the most noted of all the Indian regions for its fine carpets. It claims to be amongst the earliest to have introduced this lovely weave into India. The story goes that Prince Shahi Khan, the son of the ruler Sikander of Kashmir,

spent seven years in Turkestan and came to acquire an interest in pile carpets. When he ascended the throne around the middle of the 15th Century, he founded the carpet industry in his kingdom. After his death, it began to decline until Ahmed Beg Khan in the early 17th Century was deputed by the Emperor Jehangir as Governor of Kashmir, and he became interested in carpet weaving. He personally had a look at carpet making in Persia, and on his return gave a fillip to it. He had weavers specially trained and provided with better tools, and carpets began to flourish. After that for almost a century the industry went through several vicissitudes in which some foreigners figured including French and German firms trying to manufacture carpets for export, but eventually they retreated. Till then shawl manufacture had been paramount in Kashmir. In this the Kani weave held the pride of place, done with manipulation of bobbins carrying various coloured threads so as to get interlocked while being passed through the warp. Though the Persian type of shawl was introduced into India from Persia, this technique of weave had been practised in the country from very early times in some of the fabrics.

The export of Kashmir shawls declined as some European countries took to shawl manufacturing with copies of oriental patterns, especially the Paisley designs. Several of the shawl weavers are said to have moved over to carpets as the latter grew in popularity and the demand for it began to rise.

Carpet manufacture got fairly well established under Mitchell and Company and with it there began a steady flow of Kashmir carpets to Western countries. For almost five decades from 1851 to the early years of 1900, Kashmir carpets won great distinction and several prizes: at the Chicago Exhibition of 1893, the Paris Exhibition of 1900, and the London Exhibitions of 1902, 1903, 1906. One of the finest Kashmir carpets made in silk warp for Maharaja Gulab Singh won much praise at the London Exhibition of 1851. The Royal Palaces in England like Buckingham, Windsor, etc., patronised them also. Based as it was on the Persian model, the Kashmir carpet maintained the same identity over the centuries, in looms and the



A hook worked rug from Srinagar, Kashmir, with a reproduction of a hunting scene from a Moghul miniature with Urdu verses in the border.



A carpet from Warangal, Andhra Pradesh. The medallion design is inspired by the marble design at the Ithmad-ud-Daula tomb at Agra.

weave, and the knots, except that in Iran weaving is done by women whereas in Kashmir it is all by men.

At one time, as elsewhere, only handspun yarn was used in carpets but it is no more so. The carpets are made of cotton warp and woollen weft with cotton backing. Kashmir has also produced carpets with woollen warp like the Persian.

Kashmir keeps to Oriental designs. In addition to the various Persian designs it also uses some of the Central Asian. In fact the copies are so faithful that it would be hard to say they were not made in their own native region. The designs which closely follow the Persian carry the old names like Herati, Henna, Main Khani, Isfahani, Shah Abbas, etc. A stiff and heavy design that has a strong attraction is known as Sardar Aziz Khan.

Kashmir is said to possess about a thousand carpet looms, most of them in factories of varying sizes, engaging about 1500 weavers, and about a hundred with individuals and families.

Besides the private factories, there are four production centres run by the Kashmir Arts and Crafts Emporium with 170 working looms engaging 700 workers. Their annual production is in the neighbourhood of Rs. 5.5 lakhs. The wages paid are on piece-work basis, an average of 36 paise per 1000 knots which earns the weaver about Rs. 3 a day. Children from the age of seven also work part of the day. No separate wages are paid for preparing the looms and tying the thread. For designing, the old Talim method as well as the graph paper are used.

There is one cooperative society of carpet weavers which has been working since 1948 with a membership of 121. Its production has been of the order of Rs. 1,54,627 and sales about Rs. 2,40,028. The distributed wages amount to Rs. 46,679.

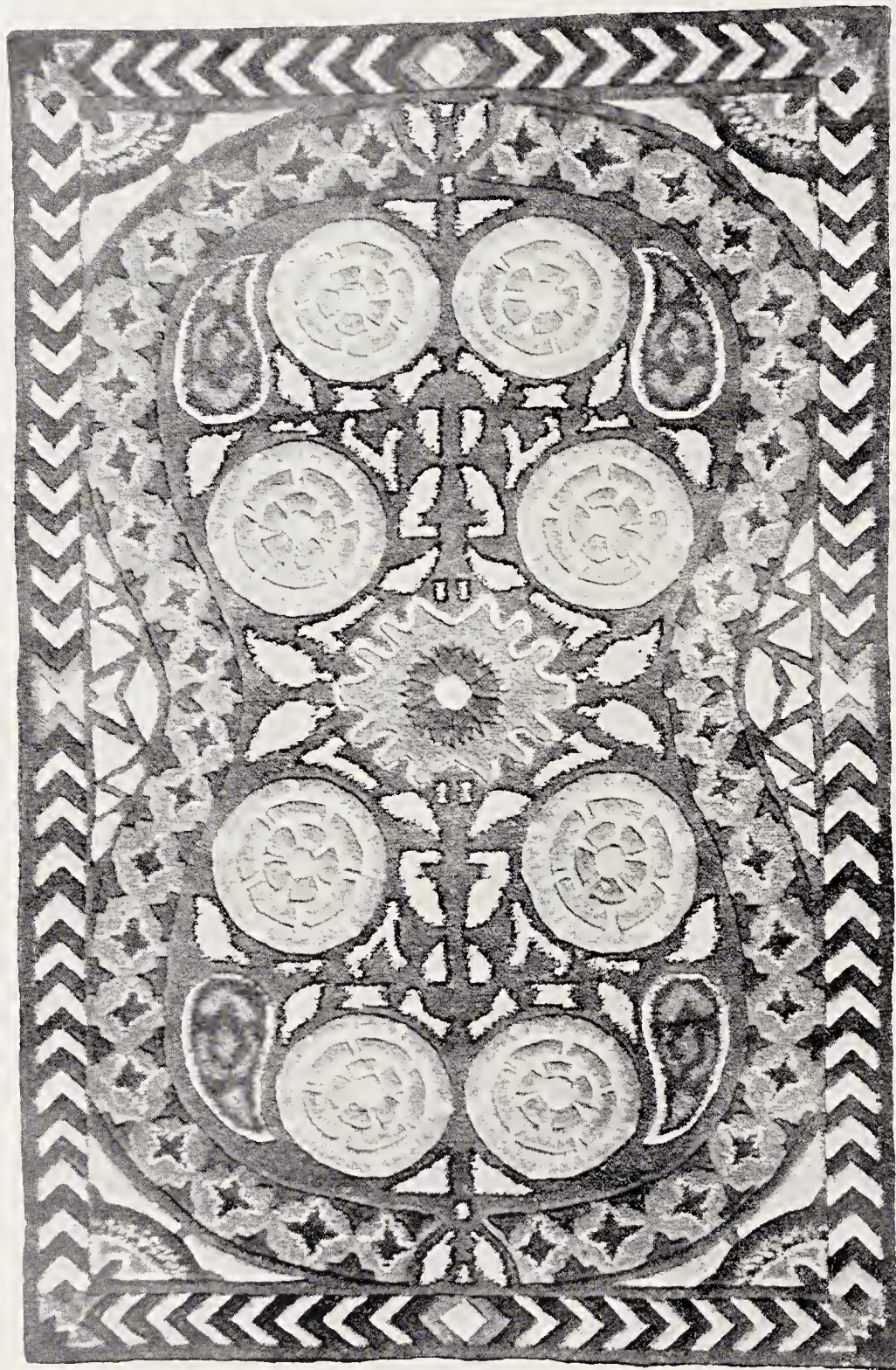
There is a growing awareness amongst the commercial houses for the need for Indian designs. A number of them have started to take from the shawl designs patterns suitable for carpets. Some interesting experiments have been made by the School of Designs in Srinagar which has taken the actual shawl patterns, juxtaposed the designs to fall within the requirements of a carpet, and simplified the colouring. A few of these designs have been successful and a new style is being created. Ghulam Mohiddin and Son have also been working on this and have produced an excellent cream coloured carpet based on the Amli shawl design. The production centres of the Kashmir Government Emporia have produced the shawl pattern in stripes which is extremely effective as a carpet. There is a rich repository in the shawl designs and if good use is made of them excellent carpets can be woven. The carpet weavers have a feel for the industry. Their recent reproduction of important old carpets such as the 17th Century pictorial Indian carpet in the Boston Museum by the East India Carpet Company, the reproduction of the Ardebil carpet and of some of the well-known Indian carpets in collections abroad, proves a compelling need for creating typical Indian styles. Appropriate colour matching is also attempted. But if new designs are to be evolved from life around, master weavers with a capacity for creation will have to be pressed into service.

In recent years with the export drive the demand for Kashmir carpets has grown. To meet this, fresh hands as apprentices have been recruited. These start at an early age and anywhere between a fourth to a third of the workers are between the ages of 12 and 18.

The annual production is estimated in the neighbourhood of five to six million rupees a year. This could be increased considerably if certain measures were adopted for expanding the market for which there is considerable scope. There are certain basic drawbacks in our production which fail to make our carpets competitive in the internal market. One is the price factor, the very high cost of our wool as compared

Wool and Cotton kilim from Badohi.





This bold design has been inspired by Mathura papercuts and has been created by the Delhi Design Centre and woven at Badohi in Uttar Pradesh.

with international prices. The other is our complete neglect of and indifference to any original purposeful designing. The continuing and utter dependence on the old Persian and Central Asian designs handicaps us since the carpets from these regions come directly into the same market. Thus the bulk of the production has to depend on the Indian market. Only a small percentage is exported. At the moment Pakistan has also entered the world market with traditional types reorientated to give them distinctive character. Some European countries in the Balkans with a Turkish heritage and background have also begun to put out carpets with somewhat the same flavour.

A revealing factor also to be noted in production is that until recently Kashmir carpets were absorbing mostly woollen yarn from the Kashmir mills to the extent of 30,000 lbs. annually. Now it has dropped to 2,500 lbs. only. The demand is now for worsted yarn which is definitely replacing the woollen.

The demand for the large size carpets has also declined and today it is the smaller sizes which seem popular. Here again this is mostly determined by the price factor.

Amritsar—Panjab

Amritsar as a carpet weaving centre began to take shape around 1840 when a batch of weavers along with a large influx of refugees migrated from Kashmir and settled in the Panjab. Here they could easily procure fine wool from the surrounding mountains and villages. The weavers were shawl and carpet makers. Some of the former also took to carpet production as its popularity led to a rising demand. Almost every locality seemed to have a weaving workshop. The oldest carpet making firm started in 1860 in Amritsar under the name of Devi Sahai Chamba Mal which is now called Arora Carpet Company. There are two other smaller factories, Puri Carpet House and the Asian Carpet Manufacturers. The East India Carpet Company is the largest and is in effect owned along with several other factories by the Oriental Carpet Manufacturers though run under the name of the East India Carpet

Company. This concern's factories are scattered over the northern Indian belt covering, besides Amritsar, Agra, Jaipur, Gwalior and Mirzapur. The Oriental Carpet Manufacturers had, before coming to India, owned factories in Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey. Hence their production was geared wholly to export. After the interruptions caused by World War II and the unsettling conditions after the partition of India, the carpet industry in the Panjab revived, exports rallied once more and a fresh reorganisation took place. To meet the rapidly rising need, weavers were also brought in from Uttar Pradesh and fresh local ones trained. A new feature initiated by the East India Company is the recruitment and training of women in carpet weaving. Before this they only helped in spinning and unwinding, separation of the warp and other such jobs.

There are in Amritsar about 250 looms giving employment to about 400 weavers. The quality of carpet weaving when done with the double knot is generally good. The East India Company is the best organised with the highest production. This region is known for what are called the Mouri carpets. They are said to be of Central Asian origin, from the word Marv which has been corrupted in time to Mouri.

The Mouri carpets are woven by the smaller firms. The geometrical patterns are done with a cotton warp and weft with the knotting in worsted yarn. The firm of Arora Brothers also produces some designs of Persian origin like Kashan and Shah Abbas. A local Mouri seems to have proved successful. Deep red, a golden yellow, Kathai, or liver red and white are the basic backgrounds. The matching with mendhi or olive green is effective. The typical Turkoman red as well as the Persian red is a darker shade with more of the orange tinge in it. But the Indian dyers have somehow introduced instead a blue streak into it. This may be because the indigo blue is so universally in use in this country.

There is however a tendency to give too much shine to the surface by the use of chemical baths, which is unfortunate.



A section of a Shahjehanpur pile carpet from Uttar Pradesh with 36 knots per square inch.

Traditional carpet from Elluru woven in colours of natural wool available in the region. The indigenous design is reminiscent of floor mosaics.



Another carpet from Elluru, Andhra Pradesh, woven in the traditions of the region.

It is said that the Mouri carpet is sometimes sold as a Kashmir product.

The East India Carpet Company has recruited some Tibetans into their carpet factory. Though they follow the technique of looping they are able to produce attractive carpets with the use of good designs and pleasing colour combinations.

Palampur—Panjab

Palampur has no tradition in carpet weaving. But the Panjab Government introduced carpet weaving as an industry to provide employment on a cottage basis. A small centre exists which now employs only women. Marketing is done through the Government Emporia and direct sales to tourists. Though the industry was located here to be able to utilise the local raw material, it has had to fall back on mill spun yarn from Amritsar as the local wool does not lend itself to better quality product.

Since the instructors engaged at this centre are from Kashmir; the style, design and technique are the same. Two major colours red and black are mainly used. The “Talim” method is employed for working out the designs. Recently on the suggestion of the Handicrafts Board that local designs should be introduced, a special design section has been set up to use Panjab motifs for weaving, inspired by local flora, fauna and adaptations from Phulkaris. Such ventures however need master weavers and designers of a high order. This is what the centre seems to lack. As Kangra and Kulu are rich in their traditional designs, there should be no dearth of good patterns provided able master weavers are put on the job.

Gwalior—Madhya Pradesh

The carpet industry in Gwalior was established around 1902 when the ruler of the State at the time, Maharaja Madhavrao Scindia, a great patron of the arts, invited the well known Greek carpet expert, Stavrides to introduce carpet weaving in his state. Later a regular carpet factory, G. P. Stavrides Gwalior Ltd., was set up.

The carpets produced here were in the traditional sphere of Persian and Anatolian designs done in both the Sehna and Ghiordes knots. Later some Chinese designs were also introduced. As the production was greatly patronised by the Maharaja and his Court as well as the Sardars, a high quality was maintained.

In 1922 the East India Carpet Company which was buying up many of the carpet concerns in India acquired this company and oriented its production towards export.

An Amritsar carpet factory, left with hardly any weavers after the partition of India, moved to Gwalior and was established as the Amritsar Carpet and Rug Manufacturing Company. These two factories keep 89 looms working, employing about 270 craftsmen. In addition there are 150 individual weavers working on their looms who also take on job work for these two factories. The wages of the craftsmen range from Rs. 2.50 to Rs.5 a day. The East India factory does only production; the marketing is handled by its Amritsar Office. The annual turnover of Gwalior is about Rs. 1,200,000.

Only a small part of the current production, about 20 per cent, is in Oriental designs, 60 per cent is in French Aubussan, and the rest plain or in geometricals. The knots range from 20 to 200 per square inch. The Oriental designs are woven in wine red and dark blue matched with two or four shades of blue, brown, moss green, grey and red while the Aubussan have for the ground camel, brown, green, pink and cream.

Jaipur was also a noted centre for carpets. The designs were, however, pronouncedly Persian, in particular the Cypress tree and animal designs, hunting scenes, mainly laid upon a ground of dark red, blue or ivory white. The borders had a swaying vine pattern with customary floral adjuncts. Carpets were also produced in Bikaner and Ajmer at the time. Today production is confined only to prisons.

Obra Sasaram—Bihar

The origin of carpet weaving in Bihar is very ancient and can be traced back to the Buddhist and Mauryan times. But what was woven was the *durrie* or *suttranji* for which there is an old tradition in this country. The pile carpet, however, began to be manufactured only after the industry was established and encouraged by the Moghuls and began to spread to all parts of the country.

It is claimed that during the reign of Sher Shah, a nawab by the name of Dandi came to this region bringing with him some pile carpet weavers. These carpets were patronised by the rulers, Maharajas, Rajas, Nawabs, Jagirdars and all classes of aristocracy and naturally the industry grew and flourished. At least a dozen places with something like 30,000 weavers attained fame for their fine carpets. It is said that some of the weavers who got inducted into the pile carpet industry came from ancient weaver communities. Though the style and technique changed with the advent of the pile, the continuity in carpet weaving tradition was maintained. It is, however, difficult to vouch for this.

With the abolition of the zamindari and other feudal forms, the change in the country's economy, the rising accent on industry and the radical social shift, the traditional patrons of the great craft declined and with them the pile carpets.

The present condition of this once famous craft is tragic. Out of the original dozen and odd centres only two still weave woollen carpets, but only against orders: Obra, 40 miles from Gaya, and Sasaram.

Today Obra has about 300 weavers, out of whom about a 100 weave in wool. But of these only about 50 to 60 can do any quality work in pile. With the fall in the demand for fine carpets the weavers changed over to cotton durries, *asans*, etc. or moved away to other regions. As this is a wool producing area, with the raw product readily available, quite a number took to weaving woollen blankets.

Sasaram has about 25 artisans who also weave in cotton or in wool if there are any orders.

At one time there was a wool emporium at Gaya where the weavers made wool purchases. This has now been closed, further depressing the lot of the weavers. The Khadi Commission has its store at Obra and Janihor and some wool is given out to the weavers. But the supplies of raw material and orders for carpets are too limited to keep the community fully engaged.

There are about 1,500 carpet weavers in this region of Bihar. Their talent is wasted, their life reduced to a shadowy existence, with no succour or sustenance. They are forced to making cheap and coarse *durries* and *asans*, or in the alternative to use wool and produce blankets.

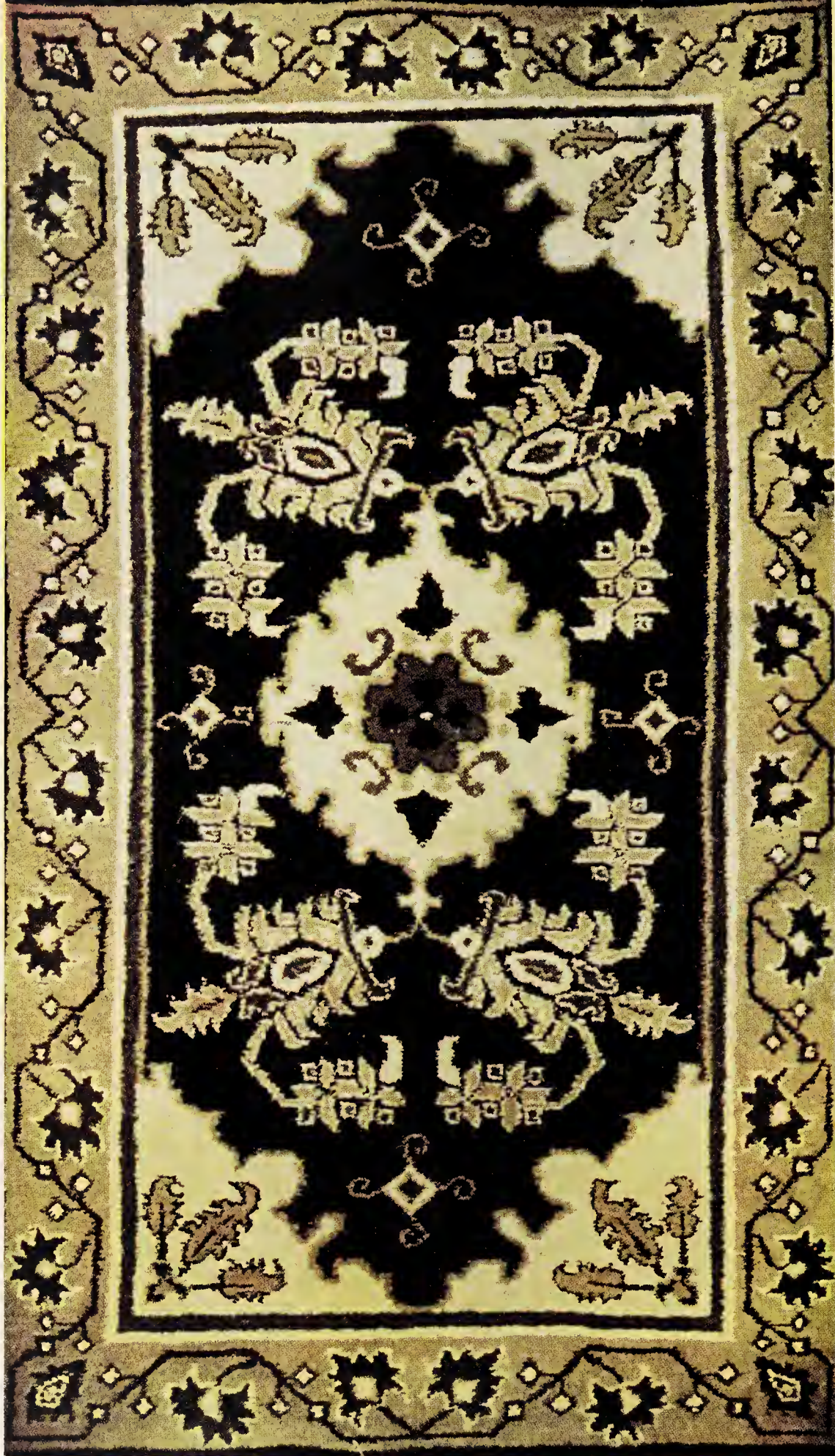
In the Buddhist era and the Mauryan period they had been making these items, and from all accounts, high quality items in this category were made, patronised by the royalty and the rich and even exported to distant countries for their beauty and attraction.

Warrangal—Andhra Pradesh

As the Moghul armies moved down south and the Moghul regime took over territories and established their rule, some of the cultural forms came to be transplanted along with them. The Deccan where the Moghul rule got a foothold, imbibed these new influences. One of them was the pile carpet, with Warrangal as one of its centres, which in course of time attained a high reputation for its fine carpets. The community of weavers who got engaged in carpet making came to be known as Kalinbuff. Warrangal was ideally located, for it is in a wool producing area. The four varieties of wool in the local market were in four natural colours: white, black, grey and fawn—which went directly into the weave. Indigenous dyes alone were once used, now the chemical ones are also in use. These carpets found a place in



A traditional carpet woven at the Tibetan Refugee Work Centre in Darjeeling with symbolic motifs used to form the pattern. The vegetable dyes are responsible for the rich mellowness of the carpet.



A traditional Warangal carpet woven in natural wool colours. Though the patterns were originally taken from the Persian carpets, they have developed into an indigenous style.

the London Exhibition of 1881 as Deccan carpets and made a great impact, winning the first prize for their workmanship. The designs were confined to Persian copies. One of the 16th Century Warrangal carpets is today in the South Kensington Museum, London, finely woven with 400 knots to the square inch. The designs in this are said to be so complicated that a change of needle became necessary for each knot. Some were even finer with 12,000 knots to the square inch. The colouring was also harmonious, the brilliancy of individual hues being kept in control by the close weave and careful distribution of the colour areas.

In the 1920's the Nizam of Hyderabad in whose domain Warrangal was situated, set up a carpet factory to organise its production on a rational and scientific basis. A link was forged with the East India Company who lifted these goods for export. In course of time several individual weavers also began producing carpets. Apart from the old Persian, some local designs were also developed, especially small geometrical motifs. Even the Persian ones gradually under-went modifications and took on more original traits with a local flavour. For instance the more delicate curvilinear Persian motifs were replaced by bold, more positive patterns. These locally evolved designs have their own names like Hashim Khani and Ramchandran Khani.

This once flourishing industry seems to have fallen on evil days. There is much decline in production and sale.

Elluru—Andhra Pradesh

The weaving of pile carpets in Elluru can be traced back to about the year 1679 when this craft also spread down south under the Moghul regime. It is claimed that from amongst the original Persian weavers who were brought over to introduce pile carpets in India or some of their descendents, some families came south and settled in this region at Masulipatam and continued to pursue their traditional vocation. Masulipatam was an important trade and industrial centre and seaport at the time.

From here Indian crafts and carpets were shipped by the East India Company to English and European ports. This was considered at one time as one of the finest carpet producing centres, producing a variety of the most beautiful designs, surrounded by a delicate outline of a tint in perfect contrasting harmony with the colours of the parts surrounded by it. In fact it was said that these designs blossomed as delicately as the first flowers of spring.

It is wonderful to find this little town today still faithfully producing the Persian design carpets, for a few of the families claim direct descent from the original migrants. The weavers here as in Warrangal are known as the Kalinbuff community.

One of the main explanations given for the migration of the weavers from Masulipatam to Elluru is that the indigenous materials, from which dyes for the yarn were manufactured, were obtained plentifully around Elluru. For instance, the locality where they now live is known as Tangellamudy which is the name of a flowering shrub from which a yellow dye is obtained. Indigo and Majitha from which comes a red dye also grow locally. The raw material is wool of local origin provided by the sheep that graze on the uplands of both the Krishna and Godavary districts. This woollen yarn does provide very fine and durable carpets.

The technique of weaving in Andhra Pradesh still continues on the traditional lines as also the basic Persian style designs. But they have assumed some characteristics of their own and are known by a variety of local and typical Andhra names. The central ground called Khana and the border Anchū, each has its own distinctive design and name. In the latter are: Jampal or Guava, Chota Ghana or small marigold, Bade Ghana or big marigold. Other border patterns have taken on the names of personalities associated in some ways with them like, for instance, Ankinedu Anchū after the family name of the Challapally zamindar, or Latchanna Anchū. The Khana designs are also similarly named after things and people. The popular ones in the former are Shahnawas, Gulbunthi, Pharsi, Shahnamal, Ambarcha Annanas,

Babul. In the latter are Ramchandran Khani, Bhashim Khani, Nurjehan Khani, Gopalrao Khani, Robert Khani. These personalities were evidently important in the region and had patronised and helped the industry. For instance, one of the latest additions to the list was the Reddy Khani, named after the one-time Governor of the State Sir K. V. Reddy Naidu who inaugurated a society of carpet weavers in 1923. The use of animal and bird designs was always restricted to the dove, the blue pigeon and the peacock.

The largest share of the output is in private hands of whom, about half a dozen account for substantial production. But there is a general decline and with it the variety of designs has also shrunk to one or two mainly for local sales. There seem to be hardly any of the creative and imaginative master craftsmen left. The carpets directed for export are largely confined to the U.K. market which only absorbs the smaller and cheaper variety. In fact these are quite coarse, about four knots to the square inch.

The cooperative society which has come down from 1923 and a private manufacturer are the only producers of a slightly better quality of carpets. The cooperative is also not in good shape and seems to function spasmodically. The average business which used to be around Rs. 70,000 has now declined to Rs. 29,000 with a large accumulation of unsold stocks.

Madras and Mysore

Madras and Vellore were also once famous for pile carpets. Later Haider Ali founded a carpet factory in Bangalore, bringing good weavers from other centres and producing excellent carpets. Some of these looms are still working. Fine silk ones were woven in Salem. Most of them have disappeared.

Kerala

Malabar was once known for pile carpets with very typical Indian designs free from any outside influences. They used only the local wool which was coarse,

They were, nevertheless, made attractive by evolving large designs with bold colours which lent character and dignity to the coarse yarn. The gay colours stood in fine harmony with the prominent designs working out a good balance. Extolling their beauty Sir George Birdwood says:

“No other manufacture of carpets known could hold a pattern together with such a scheme of colouring and scale of design. The simplicity and felicity shown in putting the right amount of colour and exact force of pattern suited to the position given them, are wonderful and quite unapproachable in any European carpets of any time or any country. They satisfy the feeling for breadth and space in furnishing, as if made for the palace of kings.”

The silk carpets made there also had a special striking quality. The effects of the play of light and shade when walking across them was like that of summer clouds passing over a field.

Sunhemp carpets of Madras

A new line in pile carpets was introduced with the pressing into service of sunhemp in Madras State. A training centre for this purpose was started at Gopal-samudram in Tirunelveli district with 12 trainees. The course is of two years' duration. The training includes carpet as well as drugget production. The trainees, as they completed their course were formed into a cooperative. The cooperative has a membership of 73. It will need time to get established into proper working.

The carpets have a cotton-twine warp and two ply yarn is used. For the weft two-fold sunhemp twine is used. This yarn is far more even and smooth than carpet pile yarn.

The technique of weaving and knotting is the same as in the handwoven woollen carpets. The looms are vertical but improvised by strong Rambans with some variation in the upper warp beam; that is, the upper beam is lowered rather

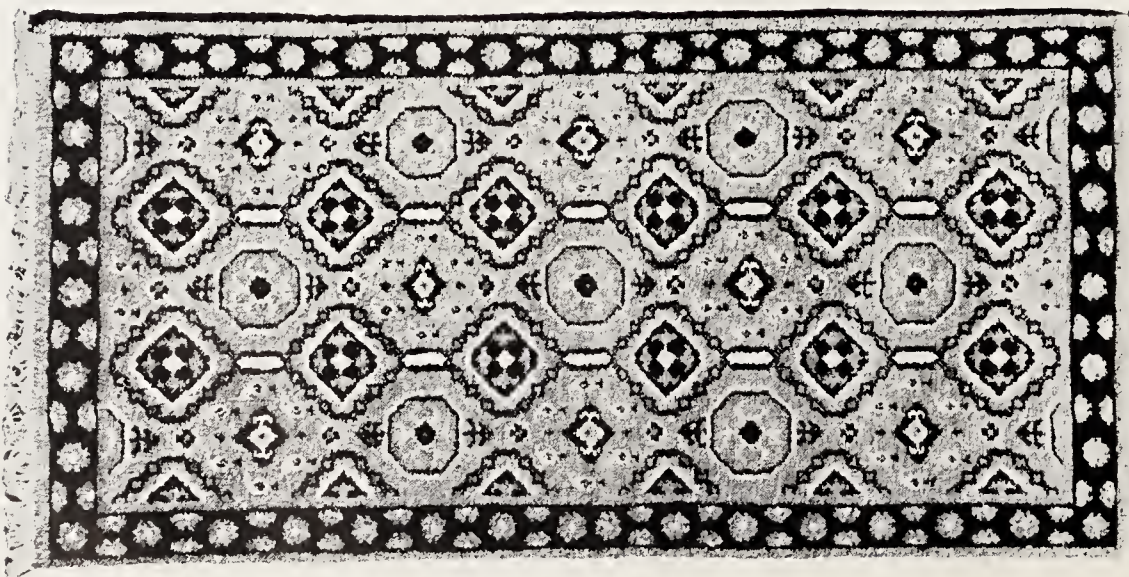
A carpet from Kalimpong woven by Tibetan refugees in traditional motifs.



Printed cotton picnic dari
from Kalimpong.



Another carpet from Elluru in natural shades of
wool available in Andhra Pradesh.



than warp unwound off it. The pile density is 50 knots a foot which works out to about the same density as the Bhadohi—Mirzapur carpets of $3\frac{3}{4} \times 19$ feet quality. No separate finishing operation like clipping or embossing is carried out. The levelling of the pile is achieved during weaving.

Other Floor Coverings

India has a variety of other floor coverings which merit more than passing mention.

The Indian durrie is a truly indigenous product and seems to go back to the early Aryan days. It is a pileless cotton fabric with a simple design of coloured lines or geometrical patterns like squares. Of these patterns Sir George Birdwood says: “No conventional ornament is probably more ancient than the coloured stripes and patterns we find on Indian cotton cloths and cotton carpets.”

Whatever doubts there may be about the origin of the Indian pile carpet, there is none about the authenticity of the Namda. The Namda is worked by what is traditionally known in the West as the Tambour-needle. It looks rather like a crochet needle with a hooked end. This technique according to some may have been introduced from Asia Minor via West Asia.

Namdas are plain or beautifully ornamented floor-coverings with coloured wools. The felt for the background is very simply prepared by spreading the wool evenly on a sack cloth, moistened with a solution of gum mixed with chalk, and rolled backwards and forwards with a large wooden rolling pin till the wool is even and felted. Coloured designs are formed with dyed wool and laid on the background and pressed in to form the decorative motifs, or by means of felt applique work.

Kashmir Rugs

Kashmir has some unique products in this line: Namda, Gabba and the recently introduced chain-stitch rug.

Gabbas are embroidered rugs made by cutting out forms in woollen cloths of various colours which are inserted and counter-changed, the edges and field being worked in a larger embroidery stitch in suitable colours. Tattered woollens are used with advantage to present the most lovely designs. The material is sewn on to the base with the chain stitch so as to make the rug appear rather like a quilt. Gabbas usually look very gay with bright flashes of designs on the dark sombre background. This in fact gives the old material a new look.

Navalgund Durries

Navalgund is a small place situated about 40 miles from Dharwar in Mysore State. Tucked away from the main stream of life, it is very little known and its durries though very attractive and unusual, have remained unseen and unknown to the rest of the country.

At one time this was evidently a flourishing place for durries. They are traced back to a group of weavers who came originally from Bijapur when it was the flourishing capital of a dynasty which ruled over the region. Obviously the original carpets were in wool. But with the demand for cotton durries on the increase, the weavers switched over to the cottons. The durries have, however, continued to retain their original designs and colour combination which are quite peculiar to this place and their like are not to be found anywhere else.

It was the Handicrafts Board which first discovered these weavers and their durries. At present there are only seven families who can still weave these unique designs. For lack of attention and encouragement the rest of the families who were traditional weavers seem to have abandoned their vocation and taken to other pursuits. Even these seven families are in a depressed condition. As a matter of fact durrie weaving seems to have now reached a stage where it does not seem to be able to provide even a subsistence to maintain a family. The men have mostly taken to other more remunerative modes of employment and it is now generally the women who do the

weaving by memory, mostly in their leisure hours. There are no new master craftsmen emerging from amongst them as there is no incentive.

There are still a few old master craftsmen left each of them adding the word Jhamkhana (carpet) as a suffix to their own name. Thus we have Nabu Sahib Jhamkhana, Jandi Jhamkhana, Makdun Jhamkhana, etc. Although there is a cooperative, it does not seem to function. At the moment each weaver earns only Rs. 15 to Rs. 17 per carpet of 4' x 7' size.

Because of their unique picturesqueness, the Handicrafts Board felt strongly that every attempt should be made to revive these durries. The Navalgund weavers seemed too apathetic, because of long disillusionment, to respond to any rehabilitation scheme. It, therefore, meant seeking new recruits. The authorities of the Dharwar Vocational School for crafts readily came forward to give training in this style of durrie weaving.

The experiment has, however, not worked out very successfully although the school has introduced fast dyes as against the direct colours which the Navalgund weavers use for economy. The trainees do not receive adequate facilities to induce them to stay on with durrie weaving. These beautiful durries could still be lifted out of the prevailing morass by introducing new remedial measures. The cooperative should run its own dying department and assure the customer of fast colours. A vigorous effort could also be made to introduce them in the traditional designs and colours, to a wealthier and more sophisticated market that can afford to absorb them by paying a better price and providing the weavers a more adequate income. This would then serve to attract the better class of artisans and build up master weavers. The larger looms, which are in a broken down condition, would have to be replaced so that the bigger durries which are more remunerative may be brought into vogue again.

Bhavani Carpets from Madras

The Bhavani carpets and durries of Coimbatore district in Madras seem to have been in existence for at least two centuries. In the early days this weaving was confined to only a certain community known as the *pandaram*. Two master craftsmen, Basava Pandaram and Arumuga Pandaram were the pioneers who provided the leadership in building up this industry and got about 50 looms running. Only vegetable dyes were used. The synthetic dyes came into use with the arrival of the German colours.

The first organisation of the Bhavani weavers was formed in 1931 when one Sangameswar Chettiar helped to start a society by the name of Sri Chellinndiyamman Vartaga Sangam, covering all the weaving establishments. During that decade the market grew and the Bhavani products found their way to several States all over India.

At first these weavers were said to be producing only simple striped designs. Gradually, however, other designs and motifs, floral and geometrical came into vogue.

At present there are about 10,000 looms running in Bhavani and nearby places like Kumarapalayam, employing in all about 15,000 workers. These looms are frame-fit looms with a general arrangement of two shafts in one-up and one-down system, enabling any design to be made in the extra weft system.

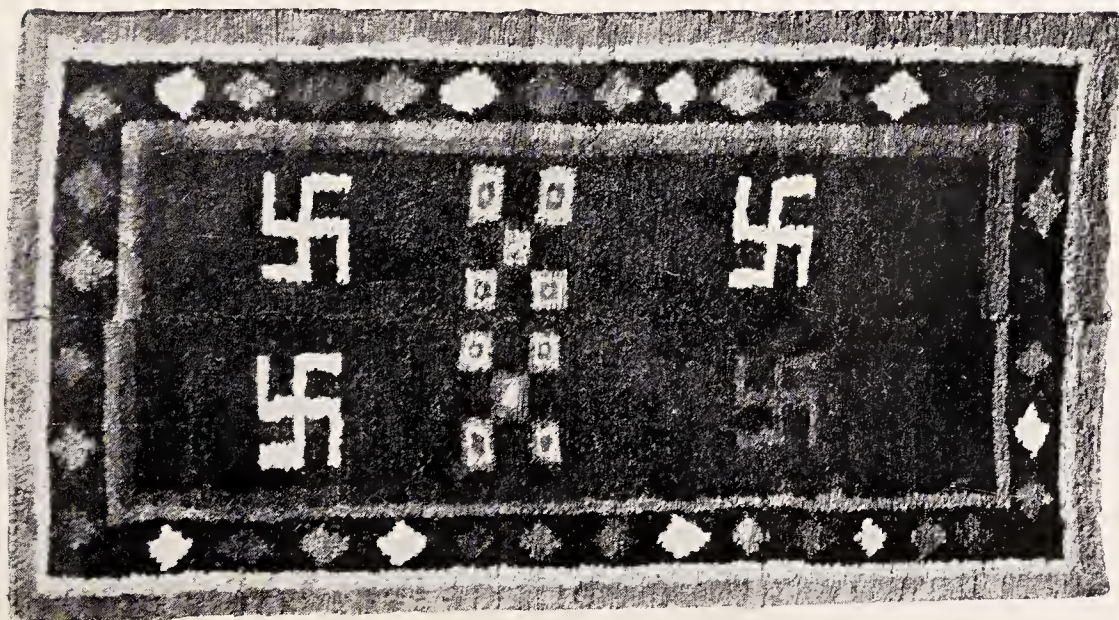
As elsewhere, direct colours are in use for the sake of economy. The difference between these and the vat colours is as high as 200 per cent and the minimum not less than 160 per cent. The vat colours are in short supply and sell at fantastic prices and make them prohibitive so far as the ordinary weaver is concerned.

The main varieties produced are in cotton which are plain striped with cotton designs on a cotton base. In silk they are plain striped with silk designs on a silk base or silk designs on a cotton base.

Monpa carpet from Kameng Division of North
East Frontier Agency with dragon motifs.



Bhotia carpet from Himachal Pradesh with the
ancient swastika motif.





Sisal fibre plaited rug from Ahmed-nagar.

In view of the popularity of the Bhavani products and the large number engaged in them, one of the main requirements is the introduction of good reliable dyes. The answer seems to be to bring back the vegetable dyes, which could be done initially by opening an extension service of the Handicrafts Board's Dye Research Laboratory at Bhavani through a dyeing centre which can guide the dyers in collecting the required raw materials and teaching the weavers standardisation of the colour mixtures.

Coir Carpets, Druggets and Floor Coverings of Kerala

Although coir floor coverings are very ancient, in recent years they have been designed to be able to serve current needs. There are several small production units, mainly in cottage form. But Alleppy is the main focal point. The Kerala Mats and Matting Cooperative Society has a big set up with about 100 looms. The looms are all structure looms on which the weavers work in designs with grass. Curiously enough, very little modernisation has been introduced. The main raw material is the local coir. But articles are also made by mixing jute as also sisal to secure a wider range of products. The main items in the way of floor coverings are druggets and mattings in all sizes, as well as bungs with stencilled designs.

Generally designs are very simply done with the up and down movements according to the Nozourk processes. While the weave is excellent, there is a complete absence of any purposeful designing. They are neither Indian nor Western. The colours, too, are not fast and though these are not subject to constant washing, they fade even from exposure to sunlight.

In recent years attempts have been made to manufacture pile carpets, mainly in single or two colours and foral motifs. Here again there is need for definite designing to give them a distinctive character.

Bihar Durries

We have noted that many of the traditional pile carpet weavers of Obra have switched over to durrie making. The quality of the weave has, however, been

retained by them though they use the ordinary frame structures. The durries are of three kinds—plain, striped and with designs. These are mainly floral, taken from the more elaborate traditional ones they once made and are done in the extra weft method. They are mainly woven in a village called Koriapur near Obra, by about 25 families. Simple durries are made in Daudhnagar, 10 miles from Obra. The largest concentration of durrie workers, however, is Sultanganj where there are over 400 weavers. The looms here are simpler with warping arrangements in big size frames. They show a wider range in variety, in sizes and in counts. The texture is strong and thick. The popular ones are in plain colours with what is called the Jora design, that is, beautiful colour stripes and the Tigri design, also in colour stripes but with tooth designs. There is a bigger size variety called Panchagaya, again with bright coloured stripes. Though they once used only vegetable dyes, chemical ones, especially the cheap direct ones, are now in use.

Patna City has two centres, Pirbais and Gulzarbag. The former has about 100 weavers who work in the Sultanganj style. The latter is not a traditional centre. This has been built up by the mustering of the ex-trainees of the Government Training Institute. The Bihar Government Designs Institute has introduced some reorientated traditional designs. They are rich and colourful in appearance attained by a little shafts motif distribution produced by the loom. These products are taken by the Bihar Cottage Industries and marketed fairly successfully. The Designs Institute has thus been encouraged to provide such innovations in other centres, like the double size carpet in single colours or dotted designs in cotton. But economically the situation is discouraging. Both for raw materials as well as finances, the weavers are wholly dependent on the middle-men which reduces their own earnings. In recent times the Khadi Commission has established their stores at Obra and Jamhor to help marketing.



